WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, comprising:

a controller for monitoring and controlling operations of said plurality of different output devices, said controller monitoring the operational configuration at each of said plurality of output devices and at least one criteria with respect to said job orders in queue;

a display device connected to said controller for displaying the operational status of each of said plurality of said output devices in a predetermined format, said predetermined format including information relating to the current configuration status of said plurality of different output devices, the current backlog of said job orders in queue for each of said plurality of different output products, said controller producing a visual indication when said operational efficiency reaches a predetermined criteria and automatically adjusting the operational status of at least one of said plurality of output devices in response to reaching said predetermined criteria.

2. A system according to claim 1 wherein said information relating to operational efficiency comprises the number of job orders in queue for any of said plurality of output devices.

3. A system according to claim 1 wherein said information relating to operational efficiency comprises the shipping requirements for one of said job orders.

4. A system according to claim 1 wherein said at least one criterion comprises one of the following:

information relating to operational efficiency of each of said plurality of devices;

shipping information with respect to said job orders in queue;

number of job orders in queue at said plurality of output devices;

time to complete job orders in queue.

5.   A method for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders and a controller for distributing job orders to said plurality of devices, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, comprising the steps of:

monitoring operations of said plurality of different output devices by said controller with respect to said job orders in queue;

displaying the operational status of each of said plurality of said output devices in a predetermined format, said predetermined format including information relating to the current configuration status of plurality of different output devices, the current backlog of said job orders in queue for each of said plurality of different output products; and

said controller producing a visual indication when said operational efficiency reached a predetermined criterion and automatically adjusting the operational status of at least one of said plurality of response to said monitoring.

6.   The method according to claim 5 wherein said information relating to operational efficiency comprises the number job orders in queue at one of said plurality of output devices.

7.   The method according to claim 5 wherein said information relating to operational efficiency comprises the shipping requirements for one of said job orders.

8.   The method system according to claim 5 wherein said at least one criteria further comprises one or more of the following:

　　information relating to operational efficiency of each of said plurality of devices;

　　shipping information with respect to said job orders in queue;

　　number of job orders in queue at said plurality of output devices;

　　time to complete job orders in queue.

9.   A method for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, comprising the steps of:

　　monitoring and controlling operations of said plurality of different output devices by said controller;

　　said controller placing said plurality of different job orders in queue among said plurality of different output devices;

　　said controller periodically analyzing the status of said plurality of different job orders in queue; and

　　said controller redistributing said plurality of different job orders in queue among said plurality of different output devices based on said analysis and at least one predetermined criterion.

10.   A method according to claim 9 wherein said at least one predetermined criterion comprising one of the following:

　　information relating to operational efficiency of each of said plurality of devices,

　　shipping information with respect to said job orders in queue,

　　number of job orders in queue for one or more of said plurality of different output devices,

　　time to complete one or more of said plurality of different job orders in queue for any one of said plurality of different output devices.

11.   A method according to claim 9 wherein said periodic analyzing occurs approximately every two minutes.

12.   A system for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, comprising:

a controller for monitoring and controlling operations of said plurality of different output devices, said controller monitoring the operational configuration at each of said plurality of output devices and at least one criteria with respect to said job orders in queue;

a display device connected to said controller for displaying the operational status of each of said plurality of said output devices in a predetermined format, said predetermined format including information relating to the current configuration status of said plurality of different output devices, the current status of said job orders in queue for each of said plurality of different output devices and products, said controller automatically balancing the job orders in queue among said plurality of output devices in response to reaching said at least one predetermined criterion.

13.   A system according to claim 12 wherein said at least one predetermined criterion comprising one of the following:

information relating to operational efficiency of each of said plurality of devices,

shipping information with respect to said job orders in queue,

number of job orders in queue for one or more of said plurality of different output devices,

time to complete one or more of said plurality of different job orders in queue for any one of said plurality of different output devices.

14. A system according to claim 12 wherein said periodic analyzing occurs approximately every two minutes.

15. The system according to claim 12 wherein said predetermined criterion comprises the requirement that a job order in queue is to be fulfilled within prescribed time period.

16. The system according to claim 12 wherein said predetermined criterion comprises the requirement that a job order in queue is the manner in which the completed job order is to be shipped.

17. A computer software program for use in a computer for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders and a controller for distributing job orders to said plurality of devices, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, said software program when loaded on said computer will cause said computer to perform the steps of:

monitor operations of said plurality of different output devices by said controller with respect to said job orders in queue;

display the operational status of each of said plurality of said output devices on a display device in a predetermined format, said predetermined format including information relating to the current configuration status of plurality of different output devices, the current backlog of said job orders in queue for each of said plurality of different output products; and

said controller producing a visual indication when said operational efficiency reached a predetermined criterion and automatically adjusting the operational status of at least one of said plurality of response to said monitoring.

18. The software product according to claim 17 wherein said information relating to operational efficiency comprises the number job orders in queue at one of said plurality of output devices.

19.   The software product according to claim 17 wherein said information relating to operational efficiency comprises the shipping requirements for one of said job orders.

20.   The software product according to claim 17 wherein said at least one criteria further comprises one or more of the following:

information relating to operational efficiency of each of said plurality of devices;

shipping information with respect to said job orders in queue;

number of job orders in queue at said plurality of output devices;

time to complete job orders in queue.

21.   A computer software program for use in a computer for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders and a controller for distributing job orders to said plurality of devices, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, said software program when loaded on said computer will cause said computer to perform the steps of:

monitoring and controlling operations of said plurality of different output devices by said controller;

said controller placing said plurality of different job orders in queue among said plurality of different output devices;

said controller periodically analyzing the status of said plurality of different job orders in queue; and

said controller redistributing said plurality of different job orders in queue among said plurality of different output devices based on said analysis and at least one predetermined criterion.

22.   A software program according to claim 21 wherein said at least one predetermined criterion comprising one of the following:

information relating to operational efficiency of each of said plurality of devices,

shipping information with respect to said job orders in queue,

number of job orders in queue for one or more of said plurality of different output devices,

time to complete one or more of said plurality of different job orders in queue for any one of said plurality of different output devices.

23.   A software program according to claim 21 wherein said periodic analyzing occurs approximately every two minutes.

24.   A method for controlling operation of a photofinishing lab having a plurality of output devices for producing a plurality of different output products for a plurality of different job orders, a controller for distributing job orders to said plurality of devices, each of said output devices capable of outputting one or more of said plurality of different output products, and a prep device for preparing job order for assignment by said controller, comprising the steps of:

monitoring operations of said plurality of different output devices by said controller with respect to said job orders in queue; and

said controller accelerating the process of said image prep for job orders in order to meet the need for additional job orders by at least one of said plurality of different output devices.